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AUTHOR Boone, Jerry N.; Walker, Hollie, Jr.
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ABSTRACT

Former Memphis State University male football and basketball players who had neither graduated nor succeeded in professional sports careers were interviewed to determine problems they had during and after college. Student records were also studied for the 23 football players and 9 basketball players who played their last season between 1978 and 1984. Findings include: a little more than half of the athletes tried to get professional contracts; 3 of the 32 athletes were unemployed (all football players) and 6 were employed part-time; 19 of the 32 former athletes felt that the 4 or 5 years they spent in the university did not prepare them for jobs; the athletes had little informal encouragement and support from college staff, little contact with student organizations, relatively little interaction with faculty, separate meals, and separate housing; some felt they were exploited in the university's pursuit of a winning record and athletic income; the single most important problem among former athletes was alcohol and drug abuse, which developed while in college; and the athletes lacked about half the credits required for their degrees after being full-time students for 4 or 5 years. Overall, however, it was found that failure to achieve academically has not ruined the lives of these young men and that their problems were the same as, but no greater than, those of typical young Americans. Recommendations for improving the university's handling of student athletes are offered. The interview schedule is appended. (SW)

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Ungraduated College Athletes: Stereotype and Reality

Jerry N. Boone

Center for the Study of Higher Education

Memphis State University

Hollie Walker, Jr.

Department of Health, Physical Education
and Recreation

Memphis State University

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The George Washington
University
One Dupont Circle, Suite 630
Washington, D.C. 20036-1183
(202) 296-2597

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Ungraduated College Athletes: Stereotype and Reality

Introduction

This is a case study of one university's efforts to find out what had happened to its former athletes in revenue-producing sports who had neither graduated nor succeeded in professional sports careers. It undertook to do so because it wanted to know what kinds of problems these unsuccessful athletes encountered while in the university and afterward in order to find ways to help future athletes. There was not just the single purpose of increasing the rate of graduation of athletes. There was also the realization that, so long as the present system of major college athletics exists, there will continue to be unsuccessful college athletes, whom colleges can serve better if they want to.

Before the study was done, the university had little to go on except for stereotypes. There have been good studies of the lives of former college athletes who graduated and/or became successful professionals, and some studies which fail to differentiate between those who were academically successful and those who were not. But there is little systematic information about those, successful neither as students nor as professional athletes, whose assumed problems have resulted in the heaviest charges of exploitation by intercollegiate athletics. Lack of knowledge about these people leaves universities guessing as to what their problems, if any, really are and guessing what remedies may be in order, from the perspective of the individuals affected.

Stereotypes about unsuccessful athletes come from the popular media, from public officials, and from academics. When introducing a bill which would have reduced private contributions to college athletics, in the wake of publicity about non-graduating athletes in 1985, Congressman James J. Howard (Dem. N.J.) said, "When you consider that only one percent of college athletes sign professional contracts, you have to wonder what happens to those athletes who have been used for their athletic ability, but fall between the cracks without a pro contract or a degree" (Farrell, 1985, p. 30).

Writing in the Wall Street Journal, Frederick C. Klein (1985, p. 30), said:

> Young athletes (we're talking about teenagers here), some with meager academic credential, are enticed to campuses with the promise of an education, and then tied to team-practice schedules that don't give them time to pursue one. Many are placed in Mickey Mouse courses, awarded grades they don't earn, or both. When their eligibility for sports expires, they are cast adrift.

In writing about what he calls "exploitation" of college athletes, Coakley (1978) said that they often wind up with nothing but varsity letters and press clippings while the college gets just as much sports revenue and publicity as if they had graduated.

Jan Kemp, who has a heavy media following as a result of her role in the celebrated "Georgia Case," was quoted recently (Cramer, 1986, p. k 3) in a statement which shows clearly her stereotype of unsuccessful athletes.

> All over the country athletes are being used to produce revenue. I've seen what happens when the lights dim and the crowds fade. They're left with nothing. . . . I don't want athletes knocking on my door five years from now offering to rake my leaves when they could have had an education.

Some see the unsuccessful athletes as ignored and in trouble.

> The minute his (athlete's) eligibility expires, the Athletic Department's concern for his welfare suddenly evaporates. The free tutoring stops and an athlete finds himself faced with a flock of difficult classes which somebody has put off to keep him eligible. He finds himself encased in the stereotype for the dumb jock and psychologically devastated (Meggyesy, 1971, p. 58).

This view is bourne out in biographical treatments such as the tragic story of California-Berkeley basketball star Robert Presley (Michelson, 1980).

Despite the prevalence of this negative stereotype, there is an opposing view to the effect that former college athletes do pretty well even though they earn neither a degree nor a professional career. In commenting on the positive effects of college football, Sack (1977, p. 93) said, "A few of them (college players) will

receive lucrative pro contracts and others will cash in on their celebrity status before a year or two erases them from the public consciousness."

There are college athletes who see themselves as successful and rewarded despite the fact that they did not graduate and are not professional athletes. Steve Meacham, a former Memphis State basketball player, was quoted in USA Today (Kirk brought, 1985, p. 6c) as saying, "I never went to school to get a degree. I went to play basketball. I guess I'm bullheaded, but I'm doing fine without it."

Questions Addressed

What are college athletes like after they have finished their eligibility to play and left college without degrees or professional contracts? Do they have a typical set of problems in making a living, in adjusting to an adult societal role, or in returning to college if they wish to do so? Do they still spend a lot of time in athletics? What are their attitudes toward college athletics? How do they view themselves in relation to professional sports? Do they feel exploited? Why did they come to the university? What were their expectations? What were their experiences as student athletes? What do they think they and the university could have done to make things turn out better?

These are the questions addressed by this study through interviews with former athletes from Memphis State University and from analysis of their records.

The Athletes

Because most of the criticisms and concerns about college athletes have been directed toward the revenue-producing sports, this study was restricted to football and men's basketball. The unsuccessful college athlete was defined as a participant in either of these two sports who:

1) was on an athletic grant-in-aid (scholarship) for at least four seasons at Memphis State University, or at it and another institution from which he transferred,
2) played his last season between 1978-79 and 1983-84, inclusive,
3) had not graduated with a bachelor's degree by the time he was interviewed in spring, 1986,
4) had not played in the NBA, NFL, USFL, or the Canadian Football League for at least three seasons.

The six-year span, 1978-1983, was chosen arbitrarily to be recent enough that the men likely could be located for interview and yet distant enough that their post-college life styles would have become reasonably well-established.

About two-thirds of the football players who had been on scholarship for four years or more were successful in the terms of this study; either they had graduated or they had professional sports careers. Yet none of those with professional careers had also graduated. Basketball was a different story. Only a sixth were successful. Of the 26 football players eligible for this study, 23 were located and interviewed. Of the 15 basketball players, nine

were interviewed. Comparison of the population of eligible athletes with those who were interviewed, in terms of age, race, and ACT scores, suggests that the sample interviewed is reasonably representative.

[TABLE 1 about here]

Procedure

The interview was structured and standard for all athletes. The areas investigated in it came from a variety of sources--reading about stereotypes of unsuccessful athletes, conversations with former athletes who were not quite eligible to be included, and conversations with high school and college coaches.

Not all questions were asked of all athletes. Instead they were arranged in contingency fashion so that an answer to a given question often determined what would be asked next. The interview is shown in Appendix A.

Confidentiality was promised and the men were assured that not even a list of names would be reported with the results of the study. Those who were still in the area came to the campus for interview. The out-of-town men were interviewed in homes, airports, hotels, and work-sites in eight states.

The athletes' records were examined with the help of admissions and records offices and the degree analysts in the offices of the college deans.

Results[1].

Sports After College

A little more than half of the athletes tried to get professional contracts (12/23 FB; 5/9 BB). A few of them believe they may still make it despite repeated rejections (3/23 FB; 1/9 BB). About half of those who tried were given a chance, either as far as training camp or, in a few cases, a short period of playing. The principal reason for not giving professional sports a try was the realization that they did not have a good chance, but about a fifth of the men said they had lost interest in playing by the time their college eligibility expired.

The former athletes continue to enjoy participating in competitive sports and keep themselves in good physical condition. They fill their leisure time with physical activity. Basketball players have kept up active involvement with their particular sport after leaving college much more often than football players (8/23 FB; 7/9 BB); most of them are still playing basketball in amateur leagues. Basketball is the most common recreational sport, even among the football players, followed by weightlifting and softball. A number of both basketball and football players devote some time to coaching children's teams on a voluntary basis.

Most of the football players find that a frequent topic of their conversation is football (18/23 FB). They talk with their friends and families about the life of the college football player, about

specific games they have played in, and about other players they have known. Relatively few of the basketball players spend much time talking about the game (3/9 BB).

Most of the football players (18/23 FB), and about half of the basketball players (4/9 BB), often have dreams or daydreams about playing and these usually involve games in which they have played. Often they have fantasies about having played better or about playing professional ball and making a lot of money at it.

An unexpected phenomenon was mentioned spontaneously and only by a few. It was that being around their sport, even watching a game on television, had been very uncomfortable for them for several years after leaving the university with hopes for a professional career. Only after finally resigning themselves to their failure in professional sports did they begin to enjoy their sport again.

Attitudes Toward College Sports and the Young Athlete

With one exception the athletes would urge high school athletes to play in college. But most would insist that the young athletes concentrate on graduating rather than on playing, and they would suggest a lot of care in picking the college and the coaches under whom they will play. Most would have their own sons play college ball (20/23 FB; 8/9 BB), but some would worry about the potential for them to be exploited by a college and some former football players would worry about the danger of injury.

Employment

Of the 32 athletes interviewed, only three were unemployed (all football players) and six were employed only part-time. The full-time workers' average annual income of $20,282 compares reasonably favorably with that of other men their age in the community where the university is located. Basketball players' average salaries were lower ($18,000) than those of football players ($23,000).

The job tenure of those employed full time had been, on average, about two years. Most of them reported having had promotions or raises and a feeling of satisfactory progress on the job. Very few reported having been on welfare or unemployment compensation.

Finding Employment

The majority of the former athletes from both sports feel that the four or five years they spent in the university did not prepare them for jobs (14/23 FB; 5/9 BB). Few reported receiving any help from fans or coaches in finding jobs after leaving the university. About a third of them said they had expected more help from those sources than they got (8/23 FB; 3/9 BB) because they feel the university and the community owe them help for their contribution to the university's athletic earnings and to the community's image, as well as for favors they had done for fans.

Job Satisfaction

Football.

Ten now have jobs in fields which they consider to be ideal, though none of these is now at the level to which he aspires.

Fourteen reported ideal occupations which would involve working with people as a major component. The most frequent field of current employment is business/industry. Nine are working in this general field. Seven see it as the ideal field, and 11 expect to be working in business/industry ten years from now. Five are working in the criminal justice field broadly defined to include security, law enforcement, and corrections. All of them see it as an ideal field and feel qualified for it. Four of them expect to be in it in ten years.

Basketball.

Five of the nine men are working in some area of business/industry and expect still to be there ten years from now. Only three see business/industry as the ideal occupational field. Five believe that the ideal occupation is in basketball, as either a professional player or coach. Although none is working in basketball now, three expect to be coaching in ten years. All of their ideal occupations involve working with other people closely and all of them expect, in ten years, to be in such occupations.

Financial Independence

Slightly over three-fourths of those interviewed said that they are independent financially (18/23 FB; 7/9 BB). Two-thirds of the athletes have dependents, and most reported being able to provide for them fully.

Living Accommodations

Nearly a third of the athletes continue to live with their parents (7/23 FB; 2/9 BB). Most of the rest are renting houses or apartments. In their own estimation their residences are, in most cases, average or above for their communities; this estimation is consistent with their monthly housing costs.

Social Adjustment

About half of the football players (12/23 FB), and nearly all of the basketball players (7/9 BB), are married now. About 20 percent of their marriages have ended in divorce (3/15 FB; 2/8 BB). None has been married more than twice. About two-thirds are church members (17/23 FB; 3/9 BB). Few are members of any other community organization but many reported working with children on the playground or as coaches of children's teams.

Two of the athletes said they are, or had been, alcoholic and one reported a drug addiction. Another said his family had been concerned about the extent of his drug use in the past, although he had never thought it was a problem. All of these reported that their use of alcohol or drugs is now under control; two of them have gone through formal treatment programs. All of them also indicated that their drug and/or alcohol use had begun while they were at Memphis State.

Four of the athletes said they had been convicted of offenses more serious than traffic violations (2/23 FB; 2/9 BB), and one had served a short jail sentence. Three of the reported charges involved alcohol or drugs, one involved bad checks, and none involved violence.

Exploitation

About half of the athletes feel that the university exploited them, somewhat more the case among football players than among basketball players (14/23 FB; 3/9 BB). Their feelings of exploitation span several different areas. One of the most frequently expressed is that they now are ignored and unwanted after having made money for the university and having served it well. Another commonly expressed feeling is that coaches and staff cared only for winning and not for the athletes' welfare, including their academic progress.

The other half do not feel exploited. Several of them indicated that they view the university-athlete relationship as a business arrangement in which the university and they got and gave what had been expected. A few said it was they who were the exploiters, since they had not worked as hard as they should to earn a degree when given a chance by the university.

Expectations When Becoming Student Athletes

Most of the athletes did not start to college with a degree, nor a professional sports career, as their principal reason for doing so. They came instead to play ball (12/23 FB; 8/9 BB). They enjoyed their sports, and college athletics represented a chance to keep playing in an exciting atmosphere. But a majority of them, particularly among the football players, did expect to get a degree when they finished playing (19/23 FB; 5/9 BB). The career most of them expected when they started was that of a professional athlete (18/23 FB; 5/9 BB). Other than that, the only occupation anticipated very often was coaching.

When asked why they chose to come to the university, quite a variety of reasons were given. The opportunity to play near home and a good recruiting campaign were the reasons most often mentioned. A number of them said they had been attracted to the city, the people, and the facilities, and several said they had come because they had a chance to play right away if they joined the team. Only one, a football player, mentioned anything related to the university's academic programs.

A bare majority of the football players (13/23), but most of the basketball players (7/9), said they had made the right choice. Most of those who would still choose the same university would do so simply because they feel it has been good for them. Among the reasons others would not choose it again was disenchantment with the coaches and the athletic-academic environment. About half of the football players and a third of the basketball players believe things would have turned out better for them somewhere else. Some of the football players think they would have had a better chance for a professional career had they gone somewhere else, and some of both groups think they would have been more likely to graduate.

Campus Experiences

All of the former athletes look back on their years at the university as fun. They liked the friendships they formed, the trips, the city and playing ball. But they were not well integrated into the life of the university. They did not often identify with any aspects of university life other than athletics. They had little contact with students other than their teammates, nor with faculty.

Few of them belonged to any kind of organization except for athletic teams (5/23 FB; 1/9 BB). About half of the football players felt that they could go to one of their coaches for advice or counsel about their problems; others felt that there was no one on the university staff who was willing to listen to their problems and try to help them. Nearly half of the basketball players said they had gone to no one for advice or counsel; the others had used coaches from both college and high school or a parent.

Being Student and Athlete Simultaneously

Almost all of the athletes think it was difficult to be a student and an athlete simultaneously (22/23 FB; 6/9 BB). In every way, they saw the university as placing a much higher priority on their athletic performance than on their academic progress. The single greatest hindrance to their being students, in their view (17/23 FB; 6/9 BB), was the amount of time and energy required for practice and games. They indicated that the number of hours required each day during the practice season and the playing season prevented their taking some needed classes which conflicted with practice and that they often were too exhausted to study. Some of them also mentioned, and their records certainly bear this out, that they were enrolled repeatedly with professors who were known to be lenient in grading athletes and in other "eligibility" courses, even though the courses were not involved in their degree programs.

The athletes clearly do not place all the blame for their failure to graduate on the university and its athletic programs. Two said that they had made no effort whatever to be students. Nearly all of them said they should have been more diligent about going to class

and studying (18/23 FB; 7/9 BB). They are quite aware that some other athletes with the same time demands, the same coaches, and the same academic advising system did graduate. A few of them indicated that their own susceptibility to alcohol and drugs contributed to their failure.

Academic Progress

The major most frequently pursued was physical education in preparation for high school coaching and teaching; all the basketball players were in that field (9/23 FB; 9/9 BB). Criminal justice also was a fairly popular major among the football players (5/23 FB), as were some business majors (4/23 FB).

About two-thirds of the players were academically eligible to return to school (15/23 FB; 5/9 BB). But nearly half were not accurate in recalling whether or not they were eligible to return, reporting it too pessimistically just about as often as they reported it too optimistically.

Even after being in school full-time and on athletic scholarship for four, and sometimes five, years, they were a long way, as a group, from meeting degree requirements when they terminated their full-time enrollment. On the average they had earned fewer than 110 semester hours credit. But, more importantly, they still were more than 60 credits short of a degree, on the average, and some were 98 credits short in a curriculum where 132 credits are required. Just as they frequently were mistaken in recalling their academic standing, they missed, by an average of 17 credits, in estimating the number they had earned before terminating full-time enrollment. The records of those farthest from degree requirements typically showed

many unnecessary courses in conditioning and physical activities, repeated enrollments in particular courses even after they had earned credit for the same courses, frequent enrollment in courses which had no bearing on their own degree programs, and frequent dropping or withdrawing from courses when playing seasons were completed. For most of the athletes, it would have been obvious to any reasonably informed person, two years prior to completion of athletic eligibility, that they had no chance of graduating.

Returning to College

About a third of the athletes were enrolled in college somewhere at the time of the interviews (8/23 FB; 1/9 BB) and one graduated at the end of the term. Most of these were full-time students. Fewer of them were still enrolled at Memphis State University than at other colleges. Several reasons were given for their having transferred; usually these had to do with convenience and with preference for a smaller college. The persons most often cited as influencing the athletes to return to college were parents.

Almost all of the athletes who were not in school when interviewed said that they would like to return to college (13/15 FB; 6/8 BB), usually to get a better job. They think that, if the university wants to help them, it could do so best by paying their tuition. Some would also like to have new advisors and information about remaining degree requirements made available to them. A few want no help from the university even though they do hope to go back to school.

Athletes' Suggestions

A request for their suggestions as to how the university's handling of student athletes should be improved was taken quite seriously by the athletes and their answers usually were very deliberate. Only one had no suggestions for change and there were few differences between the responses of football players and those of basketball players. A few of their suggestions had to do with the ways their coaches had used them in games; that is, they thought their chances for a professional career could have been better if coaches had used them differently. But most of the suggestions were about improving the handling and atmosphere related to academics. Two suggestions were mentioned more often than others: (1) that the coaches demand less time in practice and team meetings (15/23 FB; 4/9 BB), and (2) that academic advisors place higher priority on helping athletes get degrees than on keeping them eligible to play and that they involve the athletes in degree planning (8/23 FB; 4/9 BB). Another suggestion, offered almost as often, was that coaches should not allow athletes to play, nor even to dress out for games, unless they are in good academic standing and attending class. They felt that physical punishment for academic neglect, usually running laps, was ineffective as a motivator. Good career counseling and a constant, systematic program to remind athletes about the need for education in occupations other than professional athletics was stressed by several. Some of them also suggested small stipends for athletes, conditional on their maintaining academic progress. Although a program of prevention of drug and alcohol abuse was mentioned only by a few, those who did suggest it were very insistent.

Conclusions

This case study of one university found, among its former athletes who neither graduated nor made professional sports careers, some characteristics which conform to the public's view of such persons and some which do not conform.

When the athletes entered college, more of them anticipated playing professional sports than earning degrees. But the fact that they achieved neither may have been less disappointing to them than the public would expect. Often their principal goal in going to college was met anyway, because the most important goal to most of them when they entered was simply to play ball.

While many of these athletes knew that very few college players become professionals, they still believed, during the very time they were college students, that they would make it and would not be dependent on a college education. While this belief may have contributed to their playing well, it probably reduced their motivation to succeed academically. Furthermore, they had little of the informal encouragement and support which most students who are less isolated than athletes have, little contact with student organizations, relatively little interaction with faculty, separate meals, and separate housing. They simply were not treated like students who were seeking degrees.

Unrealistic striving for professional sports careers continues among some of the former athletes. It is not uncommon to find them trying out for professional teams and clinging to remote possibilities for several years. The university needs an active

continuing effort to promote realistic expectations about professional sports and the importance of education. Some of the unsuccessful men who were interviewed would be willing to assist in such an effort, now that they have learned from experience. There is a possibility that more realistic expectations would reduce athletes' interest in playing hard. If so, the public and the university would have to be willing to accept more losses in the interest of the players. At the same time, the university should promote a student identification among athletes by integrating their housing, dining, academic advising and registration with that of the student body.

Failure to achieve academically or professionally has not ruined the lives of these men, either socially or economically. Among them one finds the social problems, unemployment, divorce, crime, substance abuse, etc., which are typical of young Americans, but in no greater abundance. They do not fit the popular picture of the former "jock" hanging around a gym reliving past glories, even though they come from a group who would be assumed, because they are unsuccessful in the eyes of the sports-watching public, to fit that picture best. As a group, they are employed and about as independent as the average, although in jobs which, we suspect, are more like those of successful high school graduates than those of the college-educated. Many of them work in some area of business, just as most other people do. But another field, that of criminal justice, employs a disproportionately large number of them. Most of them are oriented toward working with people in some capacity; they are a somewhat gregarious group. As long as the university continues to admit athletes who are not likely to graduate, and continues

playing them when it is obvious that they will not, it should make career counseling and job placement services available to them prior to the completion of their athletic eligibility.

Their college experiences did not leave the men bitter toward athletics. They still love their sports. It occupies their thoughts a good deal, and they strive to maintain their good physical condition. They would like to see their own sons be college athletes.

Despite their positive attitudes toward sports in general, a number of the men do have hard feelings toward the university where they played. In a variety of ways, they feel they were exploited in the university's pursuit of a winning record and athletic income. The university needs to be sensitive to its athletes' feelings of being mistreated, whether justified or not, particularly their feelings that winning is more important than the welfare of the individual or his academic success. Sometimes the athletes' complaints are legitimate and can be resolved. Those which cannot be resolved and which continue to be voiced give the university a bad name because the athletes are, as a group, the university's most public students.

The single most important problem found among the former athletes, no matter how few, is that of alcohol and drug abuse. All of the men who reported the problem said it had developed and flourished while they were student athletes. The university has an opportunity, and an absolute obligation, to exert a positive

influence in this area at a time when young men are most vulnerable and are, because they are athletes, highly subject to oversight and control by their coaches.

The finding which surprised the authors most was that, as a group, the athletes lacked about half the credits required for their degrees after being "full-time students" for four and, in some cases, five years. Some lacked as much as two-thirds of their requirements. Their records were replete with activity courses, which often were not required, and with other particular non-required courses, some of which were taken over and over again for credit. In most cases, any informed person who looked at the athletes' records two years prior to their completing athletic eligibility would have known they had little chance of graduating. If some of the athletes ever graduate, they will do so with many credits which have not counted toward their degrees. While this is true of non-athletes as well, the problems seen in the records of these athletes is extreme and can be accounted for only as maneuvers to keep them eligible regardless of academic progress.

While most of the athletes accept blame for their failure to graduate, they blame the university and its athletic programs as well. They think they should have tried harder and gone to class more while they were fortunate enough to have scholarships. But they think the university made it clear to them that sports was more important than academics. They saw this being emphasized to them, not in words alone, but in excessive time spent in athletics, in an

academic advising system which stressed "eligibility schedules" as opposed to schedules filled with degree requirements, and in letting them play when they clearly were in academic difficulty and were making no effort to do better.

In order to correct its contribution to the athletes' academic failure, the university should admit only those athletes whose credentials predict they have a reasonable chance of academic success. Furthermore, all administrative connection between the Athletic Department and the academic counseling/advising staff should be eliminated to reduce possible conflict of purpose between the athletes' academic welfare and winning games. The practice of scheduling athletes into "eligibility" courses to the exclusion of required courses should be stopped. Athletes should not be allowed to play, or even to dress out for games, while on academic probation or when not attending classes regularly. The amount of time athletes devote to practice, game preparation, and playing should be reduced.

While some of the changes recommended here are possible as administrative acts, others would require an attitude of "willingness to lose", if necessary, in order to have an athletic program which is a respectable part of a good university. At the time of this writing, some of the changes have been made at the university where this case study was commissioned.

While these findings are based on a good sample of recent unsuccessful revenue-producing athletes from one university, there is no reason to believe that the experiences of the former athletes interviewed in this study are true of those from other sports or from

other colleges. A study of this kind needs to be extended to include a sample of all the institutions comprising the NCAA Division I A. Also, it is possible that successful athletes, or students in general, might have responded in similar ways. To establish causal relationships among the experiences and the attributes of athletes would require additional research of a different kind. Finally, it should be kept in mind that most of the information in this study came from self-report of the athletes, not from independent sources. However, the athletes appeared to the interviewers to believe in the confidentiality of the study and to address the questions objectively.

Footnotes

[1]For brevity, the following system of notation is used in presenting the results. It is shown in terms of examples.

(10/23 FB) means ten of 23 football players

(7/9 BB) means seven of nine basketball players

A detailed set of data can be obtained from the authors.

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TABLE 1

The Athletes

	Football		Basketball	
Football and Men's Basketball: 1978-79 to 1983-84				
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
On scholarship for 4 or more seasons, completing eligibility from 1978-79 to 1983-84	76	100	18	100
Graduated	39	51	2	11
Succeeded as Professional Athlete	11	15	1	6
Unsuccessful in Either	26	34	15	83

Population Eligible for This Study	Football	Basketball
Number	26	15
Average Age	27.1	27.6
Age Range	24-30	24-31
Average ACT Score	12.2	10.7
ACT Range	8-19	5-21
Black	16	12
White	10	3

Interviewed in This Study		
Number	23	9
Average Age	27.2	27.7
Age Range	24-30	24-30
Average ACT Score	12.2	12.1
ACT Range	8-19	5-21
Black	13	6
White	10	3

APPENDIX A

OPENING STATEMENT

Before we start the interview, I want to tell you why we are doing it. We want to find out what has happened to Memphis State athletes who attended on scholarship, did not graduate, and did not have a successful career in professional football (basketball). We hope to learn things which will enable Memphis State to help such athletes more in the future.

The things you tell me will be kept in complete confidence. When a report is written about the interviews, your name will not be mentioned. No one will know what any athlete said except me, one other interviewer, and a secretary. I will make notes about what you say and will record the interview on this tape recorder. The secretary will type what is recorded on the tape so I can use it to fill in anything which I have missed in my notes. The material which the secretary types and my notes will be identified by a code number, not by your name.

I. SPORTS ACTIVITIES

PURPOSES: (a) To what extent is the person still active in his sport?

(b) Does he still have hopes for a professional sports career?

(c) Is a significant part of his life still centered around former athletic accomplishments and associates?

(d) What is his attitude toward college athletics?

QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever tried to become a professional football (basketball) player?

   1-a If so, describe what happened. Why didn't you make it? When did you give up on it?

   1-b If not, why didn't you try it?

2. Do you believe you might make it as a professional football (basketball) player in the future?

3. What are your hobbies? What do you do in your spare time?

   3-a If you are still involved in football (basketball), in what way (e.g., coaching, playing, etc.)?

   3-b If not still involved in football (basketball), when were you last involved, in what way, why did you stop?

4. Do you often talk with your friends and your family about your playing days in football (basketball)?

   4-a If so, what do you tell them?

5. Do you often dream or day-dream about the days when you played football (basketball) or about playing in the future as a professional?

   5-a If so, please describe this.

6. If a high school athlete asked you about playing college football (basketball), what would you tell him? Why?

7. If you had a son, would you want him to play college football (basketball)? Why?

II. THE MEMPHIS STATE EXPERIENCE

PURPOSES:

(a) What did the person expect from going to college on an athletic scholarship?

(b) What does he see as having been barriers to his succeeding as both a student and an athlete?

(c) What should he, and Memphis State have done differently?

(d) What identity did he have in college other than his identity as an athlete?

QUESTIONS:

1. When you started to college what did you expect to get out of it?

2. Was this (answer to #1) achieved?

3. When you started to college did you expect to graduate with a college degree? (Not to be asked if question # 1 already has elicited the answer.)

4. When you started to college, did you expect to come out prepared for a particular occupation?

   4-a If so, what occupation?
   (Questions 4 and 4-a not to be asked if question #1 has already elicited the answer.)

5. When you started to college, did you expect to have a successful career in professional football (basketball)? (Not to be asked if question #1 already has elicited the answer.)

6. Why did you come to Memphis State instead of some other college?

7. If you had to choose over again, would you come to Memphis State? Why?

8. Do you think things would be different if you had gone somewhere else?

9. Did you have fun in college? Why?

10. When you had a problem, while at Memphis State, to whom did you go for advice? Why?

11. Were you a member of any organizations while you were at Memphis State?

    11-a If so, what were they?

12. While you were in college, was it hard being a student and an athlete at the same time?

    12-a If so, why?

13. What, if anything, could Memphis State have done differently to have made things turn out better for you?

14. What, if anything, could you have done differently while at Memphis State to have made things turn out better for you?

III. RETURNING TO COLLEGE

PURPOSES: (a) How does the person feel about trying to finish a college degree?

(b) If he is interested, what would be required to enable him to return to college?

(c) Does he have a realistic picture of what would be required of him in order to graduate?

QUESTIONS:

1. What was your standing when you left MSU; were you on probation or suspension?

2. Are you enrolled in college now?

   2-a If so, where are you enrolled?

   2-b (If it is not Memphis State)
   Why did you transfer?

   2-c When did you go back to school?

   2-d What is now your major?

   2-e (If not the same major as when he left Memphis State)
   Why did you change your major?

   2-f How many hours do you have toward a degree?

   2-g How many hours are you taking this semester?

   2-h How long do you think it will take you to graduate?

   2-i What made you decide to go back to college?

   2-j Who, if anyone, influenced you to go back to college?

3. Would you like to return to college? (Not to be asked if question #2 was answered "yes".)

   3-a If so, what could Memphis State do to help you return?

   3-b Would you change your major? To what new major? Why?

   3-c How many hours do you have toward a degree?

   3-d How long do you think it would take for you to graduate?

The questions I will ask you now are somewhat more personal. I want to remind you that your answers will be kept confidential. Your name will not be associated with them in any way, so I hope you can feel free to answer the questions without fear of being embarrassed.

IV. EMPLOYMENT AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

PURPOSES:

(a) What has been the person's employment history since leaving the university?

(b) To what extent have sports contacts assisted him in getting employment?

(c) To what extent is he functioning as an economically independent adult?

(d) Are his income and living accommodations sub-standard?

QUESTIONS:

(Remind subject that information given will be kept confidential)

1. Do you have a job?

   1-a If so, how much do you make?

   1-b Is your job full-time or part-time? If part-time, how much time?

   1-c How long have you had your present job?

   1-d Have you been promoted or gotten any raises in this job? Tell me about them.

   1-e Do you think you are advancing in your job as fast as you should?

2. How long has it been since your last job? (Do not ask if answer to question #1 was "yes".)

3. How many jobs have you had since you left Memphis State in _____ of 19___?

4. Have you had to live on welfare or unemployment since you left Memphis State?

5. Do you have any dependents? If so, how many?

   5-a Are you able to provide a living for these dependents?

6. Are you able to take care of all your own needs for money?

   6-a If not, where do you get the money to live on?

(Employment and Living Arrangements, continued)

7. After leaving Memphis State, did you ever get a job through the help of a football (basketball) fan?

   7-a If so, tell me about it.

8. Did you expect more help from fans, in finding a job, than they gave you?

   8-a If yes, why?

9. After leaving Memphis State, did you ever get a job through the help of one of your college coaches?

   9-a If so, tell me about it.

10. Did you expect more help from your college coaches, in finding a job, than they gave you?

    10-a If so, why?

11. After leaving Memphis State, did you ever get a job through the help of one of your high school coaches?

    11-a If so, tell me about it.

12. Did you expect more help from your high school coaches, in finding a job, than they gave you?

    12-a If so, why?

13. What kind of job are you qualified to do?

14. Do you think your education in college prepared you for a job?

15. What do you think would be the ideal job?

16. What do you expect to be doing ten years from now?

17. Where do you live?

18. Are you buying or renting a place to live?

    18-a If so, which - buying or renting?

    18-b How much do you pay per week or month?

19. Are you living in a house or apartment which belongs to a friend or relative? (Not to be asked if answer to question 18 has been "yes".)

    19-a What is the relationship of that person to you?

20. Do you think the house or apartment you are living in is average in quality, above average, below average?

V. SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

PURPOSES: (a) Is the person forming stable adult relationships with other people and with the community?

QUESTIONS:

1. Are you married, divorced, separated, never married?

   1-a If ever married, how many times have you been married?

2. Have you ever been charged by the police with anything other than traffic violations?

   2-a If yes, what were these charges?

   2-b How many charges were there?

   2-c Were you convicted?

   2-d Have you served any time in jail?

   2-e How much time have you served?

3. Do you believe you have any alcohol or drug problem?

   3-a If yes, describe the problem.

   3-b Does the problem have anything to do with your playing football (basketball)?

4. Do your family or friends believe you have any alcohol or drug problem?

   4-a If yes, what do they think?

5. Are you a member of any church?

6. Are you a member of any club or organization?

   6-a If yes, what are they?

7. When you get frustrated or upset, do you usually talk to somebody for advice, or do something physical, or just worry?

8. Do you feel that you were exploited or misused by Memphis State in any way?

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Now the interview is over. I am switching off the tape recorder. Is there anything else you would like to tell me or any questions you want to ask?